Influence of British Punjab in World War I: A Historical Analysis of Local Military Recruitment

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Abstract

The early 20th century was the era of the rise of colonial powers worldwide. Among these, Britain emerged as a major empire. Meanwhile, in 1914, the hostilities of First World War erupted during which Britain recruited 1,440,437 Indian personnel. According to the data, 60% of these military personnel were from the Punjab region of the subcontinent alone. This was because Britain admired the bravery of the people of Punjab in the Anglo-Sikh War of 1846 and the Anglo-Afghan War of 1839. This physical courage led to the development of a theory called the 'Martial Race Theory,' which included classes like Sikhs, Punjabi Muslims, Dogras, Pathans, and Gorkhas. These classes mostly lived in Punjab, Bengal, Madras, and Bombay. Moreover, India provided 1.5 million army men. However, these men were not trained for full-scale combat, and as a result, by early 1916, the recruitment ratio declined. Therefore, the British administration decided to replace the 'class system' recruitment with the 'territorial system', as the war was protracted and required manpower. Additionally, emotional cards such as 'Izzat' (honour) were used by Britain to get more manpower for the war. As the war neared its end, the number of Indian recruits declined, so Britain resorted to coercive measures to enlist more troops. It is a descriptive study based on qualitative and quantitative approaches. Internal and external criticism have been implied for the authentication of sources. Content analysis techniques are used for reliable findings.

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Keywords

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Introduction

Europe was at the center stage of escalation of World War I in 1914. Great Britain was a power ruling over the area of 12.7 million square miles consisting of the population around 450 million people. (Hermann D, 1996). The region along English channel experienced massive industrialization, France, with a low population of 39 million. Germany, France's eastern neighbor, was reemerging as a military and industrial power, with a population of 70 million. European nations engaged in a traditional rivalry, particularly in sustaining their colonies and expanding their respective empires. In this context, European states sought to preserve their dominance by closely protecting and exploiting their colonial possessions. They expanded their empires where possible and, when strategic circumstances required, exchanged or relinquished territories to sustain a balance of power that favored one nation over its rivals. This outlook is reflected in Lord Curzon's 1901 assertion that Britain's global standing was fundamentally tied to its control over India, implying that the loss of the subcontinent would result in a sharp decline in Britain's international influence and status. (Reynolds, 2014)

As the First World War began, the British state decided to engage soldiers from British Indian Army for support. Even before 1914, Punjab had become a central hub for the Army's recruitment. The war, however, greatly increased the demand for soldiers, leading to a significant rise in recruitment. Between August 1914 and December 1919, approximately 1,440,437 Indians were enlisted by the British to support the Empire's war efforts. (Government of British India, 1923) Over one million Indian soldiers—specifically 1,096,013—were deployed in service of the British Empire across multiple places, i.e. Salonika, Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, France, Palestine, East Africa Persian Gulf and Aden. (The War Office, 1922) Notably, of the 480,000 men recruited from the Indo-Pak subcontinent, approximately 408,000 served in combat roles and originated from the Punjab. This indicates that by the end of the First

World War, roughly 40 percent of all Indian combatants were drawn from the Punjab alone. In addition, nearly one-third of total Indian enlistments came from this region (Leigh, 1922). The majority of these soldiers were enlisted from the semi-literate agrarian communities of northern India, reflecting British recruitment practices shaped by the so-called "Martial Race" theory. (Das, 2008)

Due to the 'Martial Race' theory and the experiences of British rulers, military recruitment in the British Indian Army was shifted from the Bengal region to the Punjab region well before the outbreak of WWI. However, As demand increased, Sir Michael O'Dwyer considered the recruitment of non-martial races in Punjab including Hindus of low Cast. The British authorities sought to enlist Punjabis in the army in large numbers to safeguard imperial interests during the war. Strikingly, approximately one out of every 28 males in Punjab was mobilized, compared with only one out of every 150 males in other regions of India. Indisputably, colonial Punjab played a crucial role in World War I. Numerous historians have examined Punjab's involvement in the Great War. DeWitt C. Ellinwood explored the opportunity to socialization and financial advantage that motivated the people of Punjab to enlist in the army. (Ellinwood, 1978). In addition, after interviewing the Sikh veterans of WWI, Pradhan analysed and find that social status and repute as the 'martial race' was one of the reason of enlisting in the army by Sikhs. (Pradhan, 1978)

Das discussed different emotional and sociocultural as a reason to enlist in the army for the war. He discussed the factors in context to family, means of earning, gender notions, religion and traditions. (Das, 2018)

David Omissi, a prominent historian, examines the socio-political evolution of the Indian Army in his influential work. He examined how the British through 'martial race' theory during 19th and 20th century focused on the recruitment of the people of Punjabi castes . Army. He also explored that colonial authorities recognized the economic factor in enlisting in army. (Omissi, 1994) Tan Tai Yong described in detail the process, intricacies, and factors that helped Punjab gain the status of 'sword arm of the Raj'. (Yong, 2005) In his extensive work, Tan Tai Yong explored that mostly martial races from Punjab reason to enlisted in the

army was to save themselves from debt and famine. He discussed his strategy of recruitment through the collaboration between elites and civil military beuarucracy. (Yong, 2005)

Accordingly, this study employs a descriptive and analytical research approach to examine whether Punjabis joined the British Indian Army of their own accord or whether colonial authorities compelled enlistment by exploiting local vulnerabilities and social divisions. It also analyzes the role of Lieutenant Governor Sir Michael O'Dwyer's aggressive recruitment campaign during the First World War, particularly his emotive appeals that invoked the rhetoric of izzat (honor) to mobilize large numbers of recruits. Additionally, this study highlights the role of the local Punjabi elite in facilitating recruitment. This research therefore addresses a significant gap in the literature by illuminating the policies and strategies employed by the colonial government of Punjab in military recruitment during the First World War. Thus, the study highlights the process through which Punjab became the 'Garrison state' of the British at the dawn of the 20th century. It further elaborates on the change in the policy of recruitment of the British during WWI, with particular emphasis on the role of the Punjab colonial administration under Sir Michael O'Dwyer, as well as the contribution of indigenous Punjabi leadership in facilitating recruitment during the First World War period. (O'Dwyer, 1925).

Punjab as the 'Sword Arm' of the Empire

Punjab is one of the last areas which were incorporated into the British Indian Empire and governed under its unique 'non-regulation' governance system. The British managed to rule their colonies by incorporating the local collaborating groups and local allies. The ruling elite, landlords, merchants, and armed forces personnel were among the collaborating groups in Punjab. The Imperial rulers, to strengthen their imperial rule through imperial military force, adopted certain recruitment strategies. Through those strategies, the British identified possible local military collaborators and merged them with the native British forces.

Interestingly, the British colonizers created and subsequently managed the vast Indian Empire with the help of Indian manpower. However, with time, the East India Company grew and it required further

manpower for the garrisoning of their interests. Thus, a distinct military force was established under three Presidency Armies: Madras, Bombay, and Bengal. Each presidency had its source of manpower which was restricted by the condition of loyalty and faithfulness. The Madras Army's recruitment was primarily done through South India. People from the Malabaris, Guntars, Rajputs, Muslims, and Tamils were recruited into the Madras Army. (Haig, 1932) Similarly, the Bombay Army primarily consisted of two ethnic groups (Konkanis and Hindustanis) from the Gangetic areas. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the groups contributed more than ninety percent as natives of the Bombay regiments. (Yong, 2005) However, as far as the Bengal Army is concerned, there were comparatively more restrictions and limitations in the recruitment of the local people and on the cost of local castes, Brahmins and Rajputs of Bihar, Oudh and Rohilkhand recruited (Heathcote, 1974).

Table 1: Recruitment Regions of the East India Company: Three Armies in the Late 18th Century

Army	Area of Recruitment
Bengal	Oudh, Bihar, Agra, Nepal, Punjab. (Only Caste-based recruitment)
Madras	Madras, Burma, Hyderabad, Central Provinces. (Supra-caste, religion & class recruitment)
Bombay	Bombay, Sindh, Rajputana, Aden. (Supra-Caste, Class & religion)

As British annexed Punjab the areas of NWFP became a good source for regular native recruitment in Army. During the Sikh rule in Punjab, they played a crucial role in the transformation of the peasantry of Punjab into a military force through their organization and training on the Western lines. After the first Anglo-Sikh War of 1846, the British got control over the eastern part of the Sikh Kingdom. From there onwards, the British opened military recruitment from that conquered region. They were greatly impressed by the military strength of the Sikhs. Hence, they raised

two regiments Ludhiana and Ferozepur in 1847. Though the British inherited a military force of 60,000 soldiers after the Second Anglo-Sikh War, they decided to disband the Sikh Army to avert any possible revolt in the region. All arms were confiscated, and the possession of arms including gunpowder was declared illegal with heavy punishments in case of violation.

As the tribal belt of the northwestern frontier came under British control, then Governor General Lord Dalhousie knew that the unemployment of the disbanded soldiers was not a judicious policy and engaged the people from Punjab, including Sikhs, to establish their authority in the NWFP. In 1849, the Board of Administration raised ten regiments of cavalry and infantry from the Punjab. However, with the 1857 mutiny by the native Bengal Army, the British realized the loopholes in their military arrangement in India. There were only 23,000 European soldiers available in the Army, fifty percent were deployed in the newly annexed Punjab. Reinforcement from England would have taken more than 8 months which was too late. The authorities at that time, therefore, decided to raise force consisting of the Punjabis. In just 7 months from May to December 1857, around a force of 34,000 Punjabis including Sikhs was raised. In short, the British reversed their previous policy of demilitarization of Punjab. They now started to raise a great number of military personnel from Punjab. A mixed composition of the force was envisioned by the authorities. Primarily, Sikhs, Punjabi Muslims, and Dogras were called to take up arms again for the defense of the empire. Pathans and Baluch tribes from the frontier region were also included. The employment of the Punjabis in the British Army continued after the failure of the mutiny as well. 'Divide and Rule' policy was employed by the British in the recruitment of the Punjabis into the British Army to avoid any possible unity among the native forces against the British. In the 1870s and 1880s, the 'class company' system was used in the Punjab regiments which meant that each company of the regiment would be comprised of a different caste or race such as one for Sikhs, one for Pathans, one for Hindu Jats, etc. By doing so, the British also ensured that the native force could never be able to unite against the British owing to their class differences, etc. By this time, Punjab came under the consideration of the British,

however, the Punjabis still were not in a great number in the British Indian Army. (Yong, 2005)

In the 1880s, after the Second Anglo-Afghan War, the British reviewed the status of their military force. The major drivers for such reconsideration were the uneasy relations of the British with Afghanistan and the rising threat of Russia owing to its expansion in Central Asia. The obsession of the military authorities with the 'Great Game' with Russia changed their decision to transform the military's function from internal stability to being prepared to fight against any foreign invasion by Russia. Lord Roberts, the Chief Commander of the Bengal's Army (1885-1893), having great experience of the north-western frontier, raised serious concerns about the quality of the native army. He argued that the quality of the British Indian Army could be improved by recruiting the best fighting material available in India. He argued that warlike tribes and classes should be identified, and military recruitment should be done from such warlike classes like Punjabi Muhammadans, Dogras, Gurkhas, Jats and Pathans. (Yong, 2005)

This gave birth to the infamous doctrine of 'Martial Race' in India. Santanu Das's analysis of the 'Martial Race Theory' highlights how the British categorized certain ethnic and religious groups as naturally suited for military service, including the Pathans, Dogras, Jats, Garhwalis, Gurkhas, and Sikhs. These groups were primarily rural and were considered historically loyal to the colonial administration, in contrast to the politically active Bengalis, who were stereotyped as weak or 'effeminate'. Das emphasizes that this classification was shaped by a combination of Victorian ideas, such as physiognomy and Darwinism, local notions of caste, and strategic political considerations. Emerging in the aftermath of the 1857 Sepoy Uprising, this pseudo-scientific theory significantly influenced British recruitment policies and the overall composition of India's armed forces. (Das, 2008)

It was an understanding of colonial authorities that there are certain clans and classes with an inherent quality to be warriors due to their ideal physique. This understanding developed on ethnic and racist bases as 'martial race theory'. (Omissi, 1994) The process of recruitment through the 'martial race theory' changed its course from Punjab to NWFP, as

people of NWFP were considered more appropriate due to their physique. The recruitment in the subsequent era was being done based on the manuals and handbooks consisted of the detailed data of relevant races, castes, sub-castes and their areas. (Yong, 2005) At the beginning of twentieth century, recruitments done from Jats, Pathans, Gurkhas, Dogras, Muslims of Punjab and Sikhs. There were four commands of the British army: Madras, Bombay, Bengal and Punjab. Owing to the availability of so-called 'martial races' in the Punjab and its geo-strategic location vis-à-vis Russian threat, Punjab became the strategically important.

The Role of Punjab in the Great War 1914-1918

India played an enormous role in the First World War both in men and material. In almost four years of the war from 1914 to 1918, India provided around 1.5 million men from the Indian army and its financial contributions were equivalent to £479 million. (Saini, 1978) Out of a total of 683,149 combatant troops recruited in India between August 1914 and November 1918, 349,688 - about sixty percent - came from the Punjab. (Yong, 2005) When the war started in 1914, the Indian Army consisted of nine divisions having 150,000 soldiers. The Indian Army was primarily organized for internal security purposes. Though the Indian Army participated in limited military operations outside India before WWI such as in China, Malaya, and Hong Kong, it was not capable enough to fight a major war outside India owing to its meager size, limited training, and different organizational structure (Farwell, 1986). As the WWI started British sent two Lahore and Meerut infantry divisions to help British forces in France and some sent to East Africa. As Ottoman Empire became the part of war field and British faced more pressure, the British Indian troops made responsible to protect Suez Canal and Persian gulf oil facilities. Owing to that, two more divisions from India were dispatched to Egypt and Mesopotamia. Around 80,000 combatants were sent abroad from India till June 1915. The soldiers of the Indian Army fighting abroad met with a dreadful fate. More than half of the soldiers of the two brigades of the Lahore division in France were killed or wounded badly within a few weeks of their arrival (Leigh, 1922). The situation was not much different in the Middle East as well. The Indian forces suffered heavy losses in their fight against the Turkish forces near Baghdad. With the call

for more man power, the recruitment process accelerated and the strength of the infantry regiment was increased from 912 men to 1000 men; whereas the strength of the cavalry regiment was increased from 625 to 700 men. (Yong, 2005)

Owing to increased demand for power abroad and more soldiers to fill the additional seats, a need emerged for more recruitment. Ultimately, the focus of the recruitment was Punjab. The majority of the soldiers who were already fighting abroad were of the Punjabis - 41 out of the 69 regiments were composed of Punjabis. (Leigh, 1922) The recruitment in Punjab in the early nineteenth century was being done based on a 'class system' from the established military districts. As per the principle and practice of recruitment at that time, the recruiters of a specific regiment were compelled to travel to the same village for the recruitment of soldiers from the same class if the class companies of class regiments were depleted. Therefore, recruitment in the military districts of Punjab was increased manifold. Astonishingly, 48,000 new soldiers were recruited from India in the last four months of 1914, however, 14,000 of them came from Punjab. Similarly, by 1915, 78,232 recruits were enlisted from India, of which 37,591 were from Punjab. (Yong, 2005)

There perhaps was a thinking among the recruiters that they were being enlisted for a limited battle in another part of the British Empire. In addition to that, they might also be enticed by the promise of the economic benefits. A few of them could have recruited themselves into the Army to be able to travel to a foreign country. The rising food prices in India after the outbreak of war also provided an economic push for recruits. Therefore, in the initial months of the war, no particular difficulty was faced by any recruiters in any part of India including Punjab. However, with the rise in the demand for manpower due to the prolongation and escalation of the war, it became difficult for the recruiting officers to find suitable people for recruitment voluntarily. (Herrmann, 1996)

The major problem for the lack of suitable people for military recruitment was the defective recruiting system of the British in India. The principle and practice of military recruitment based on the ‘class system’ was a major hurdle in the way of more recruitment. Though ‘class’ recruitment was possible for a limited number of manpower, it was

difficult to enlist many people to meet the demand at the battlefront. There were limited recruiting depots where the recruiting officers were used to operate. Moreover, these recruiting depots were far apart. There were a limited number of villages and tehsils which were the sole suppliers of men to the army. There was no institutional setup out of these specific villages to tap manpower resources. Hence, this lack of available institutional setup caused a major hurdle when the recruitment base had to be expanded. For example, if a Sikh in Rawalpindi wanted to enlist himself in the army, he had to travel to Amritsar as the recruiting depot for the Sikhs was in Amritsar and the Rawalpindi depot was only responsible for the recruitment of the Muslims. This was a serious issue for the villagers of that time, who would hardly have travelled out of villages. (Haig, 1932)

At the recruitment depot, a military officer was assigned responsibility for overseeing a specific category of recruits. There were regimental recruiting parties in the villages who were interested in enlisting those recruits of relevant class. The officer at the depot had a ceremonial role to play by merely endorsing the process through certification of the social and physical fitness of the recruits for enlistment. Neither the civil administration had any crucial role to play, nor was there any kind of coordination between the different regimental recruiting parties. In addition to the problems associated with the 'class system' recruitment and institutional incapacity of the military authorities, the alarming news from the war front also raised serious apprehensions among the local people. The native people became very critical of war after the news of the military disasters in Europe and Mesopotamia. (Leigh, 1922)

The initial enthusiasm for the enlistment into the military by the native people decreased. The soldiers who were fighting on the front line on the battlefield wrote letters and presented the dreadful situation of the warfront and losses. It was the first time that the Indian soldiers were experiencing such a devastating war. For example, a Jat sepoy shared his experience:

“Here the war is very severe, corpses lie upon corpses, and rivers of blood flow. When an attack is made, parapets are made of dead bodies, then soldiers shoot and do not take heed of others ... in the regiment we

have lost six hundred killed, two hundred rendered unfit, and three hundred wounded." (Yong, 2005)

The Indian Army was not trained enough to bear severe hardships and fight a major war. The sole experience that the Indian soldiers had was of fighting occasional skirmishes against the frontier tribesmen. Moreover, the Indian soldiers were far behind their European soldiers in military tactics and weapons. They were carrying obsolete British rifles against the machine guns of their European counterparts (Mollo M, 1981). Several Indian soldiers at the war front wrote to and warned their friends and relatives about the level of devastation and ask not to join army. (Yong, 2005) A Muslim soldier of the Punjab province named Havildar Abdul Rahman wrote to his friend in Punjab named Naik Rajwali Khan and told him about the situation of the soldiers at the war front in these words:

"For God's sake, don't come, don't come, don't come to this war in Europe. Write and tell me if you and your regiment are coming or not. I am in a state of great anxiety, and tell my brother Muhammud Yakub Khan for God's sake not to enlist. If you have any relatives, my advice is do not let them enlist. I write so much to you because I am a pay havildar and read the letters to the double company commander. Otherwise, there is a strict order on writing such a subject. Cannons, machine guns, and bombs are going day and night, just like the rains of the month of Shrawan (July to August). Those who have escaped so far are like the few grains cooked in the pot. That is the case with us. In my company, there are only about ten men. In the regiment, there are about two hundred." (Yong, 2005)

Thus, owing to these letters, many of the recruits started doubting whether the benefits promised by the British were worthy enough for these sacrifices or not. Even, some of the Indian native soldiers from the European theatre also accused the British of racial discrimination. They argued that the British were deliberately sparing their British soldiers and callously sent the Indian soldiers into the trenches to get slaughtered. Thus, the local Indians were now reluctant to enlist themselves in the Indian Army. For example, Lieutenant Colonel D.G. Rule, the Recruiting Officer in Amritsar district, mentioned in his diary that in Amritsar district, the wives and mothers of the recruits trailed recruiting parties for several miles perhaps to get an opportunity to lure away their men. This attitude was a

prime depiction of the fear for the safety of the recruits by their families especially the women. (Yong, 2005)

With the prolongation of the war and increasing demand for manpower, the British Indian authorities realized that their recruiting strategy in India, particularly in Punjab, was inadequate to meet the growing demands for manpower in Europe and the Middle East. The British administrators realized that the only possible option to deal with these issues was to fully engage the civil administration as well as utilize the influence of local socio-religious and political leadership. Only by doing so, they would be able to achieve the required number of recruits from the Punjab. In 1915, commissioner Rawalpindi Young suggested that there was a dire need for coordination among the civil and military officials to fulfill the demand for recruitment. On his proposal, a few changes were made in the recruitment arrangements, such as the appointment of Additional British recruiting officers, along with Viceroy's Commissioned Officers (VCOs), appointed to help recruitment staff. However, the situation was not much improved with these developments because the recruitment was still linked with the military districts only. Secondly, civil administration still had little role to play in the whole decentralized and poorly coordinated recruitment mechanism. However, a major shift was witnessed with the appointment of the new Viceroy of India, Lord Chelmsford. He mobilized the whole administration of the Empire to raise adequate manpower. The Governor of the Punjab, welcomed the call of Viceroy and played a significant role in this regard. (O'Dwyer, 1925) O'Dwyer was of the view that the maximum possible recruitment from Punjab could only be done by including all the classes, by integrating the civil administration into process of recruitment. Finally, in December 1916, the previous class system recruitment was replaced with a new system because of the recommendations of O'Dwyer. Thus, the new 'territorial system' was implemented in Punjab and later it was extended to the rest of India. District recruiting officers and divisional recruiting officers were appointed. The military function of recruitment was integrated with the civil administration. So, the civil administration directly controlled the recruitment process. The civil administration was at ease as compared to the military administration because of their province-wide structural

framework. Hence, under the new system, recruitment was done from all 28 districts of Punjab regardless of class system.

Central Recruiting Board was established in Delhi in June 1917 and a Provincial Recruiting Board was appointed in Lahore. Apart from officers of the civil administration, notable tribal chiefs and landed elites were also included in the Board. For example, Sardar of Ludhiana, Khan Bahadur from Shamasabad, Rai Bahadur of Rohtak, Khan Bahadur from Gojra, Tiwana of Kalra and Sardar of Raja Sansi, Amritsar, were included in the Board. All of these were leading notables in their respective areas. (Yong, 2005)

Under this new system of recruitment, the whole hierarchy of the civil administration in a district from district commissioner to village headman was responsible of recruitment campaign. It was decided in a meeting of the Recruiting Board in July 1917 that the recruiting duties would be included in the official duties of the village revenue official by amending the land revenue rules. In this way, the British authorities mobilized the whole revenue administration for recruitment purposes. The Commissioner of the Rawalpindi Division suggested that recruitment should be given the highest priority by the local administrative hierarchy. The British administration very shrewdly utilized the local influence to increase the number of recruits by involving the lower Indian officials and semi-officials such as 'zaildars'. In this manner, the officials' existing social authority was reinforced by their formal powers as representatives of the colonial government. Tan Tai Yong argues that by utilizing their local influence, these intermediaries were able not only to persuade reluctant individuals to enlist but also to manage and contain any resentment toward recruitment, preventing it from developing into broader social unrest. (Yong, 2005)

In addition to that, the Punjab government also provided welfare schemes for the soldiers to increase recruitment. Moreover, various rewards were also announced to induce recruitment. For example, around 180,000 acres of canal-irrigated lands were put at the disposal of the Indian Army's commander-in-Chief of the that was to be allotted to the Indian officers and soldiers who served the British during the war. Furthermore, another 15,000 acres were reserved for grants to those who played an

effective and crucial role in the recruitment process. Monetary benefits were also given to individuals for bringing in maximum recruits. (O'Dwyer, 1925) Owing to these efforts, at the beginning of 1918, total recruitments from Punjab had crossed 200,000 men, which was almost one and a half times the total amount pre-war Indian Army. A complete picture of the total military recruitments from all over India and from within the Punjab is shown in the following table for a comparative analysis.

Table 2: Contribution of India to World War I– Recruitments up until Armistice (Soherwordi S.H, 2010).

No.	**Province**	**Total**
1	Madras	92, 340
2	Bombay	71, 438
3	Bengal	59,052
4	United Provinces	281,143
5	Punjab	446,976
6	NWFP	45, 231
7	Baluchistan	2,088
8	Burma	18, 673
9	Bihar and Orisa	41, 552
10	Central Provinces	15, 007
11	Assam	15, 124
12	Ajmer-Merwara	8, 973
	Total	**1, 097, 642**

Role of Governor in the Recruitment Process in Punjab

Sir Michael O'Dwyer (1864-1940) ruled colonial Punjab from 1913 to 1919 – the era in which WWI broke out and concluded. According to Nick Lloyd, O'Dwyer was an Irish Catholic who passed the Indian Civil Service exam in 1882 and was posted in Punjab with designation of revenue officer in 1885. (Lloyd, 2018) He was a strong supporter of the British Empire. He was of the view that the Empire should rule "directly, strongly, and, above all, fairly." (Lloyd, 2018) During WWI, O'Dwyer played an undeniable role in enhancing cooperation between the military authorities and Punjab's civil administration to extract maximum recruits. (Yong, 2005) He appealed to izzat (honor) and emotionally manipulated the sentiments of local people to increase with the aim of boosting the enlistment of local recruits to support the imperial war effort. The letters written by the Punjabi soldiers from the Western War Fronts depict the effectiveness of those appeals to izzat (honor) and their resonance with the Punjabis. The colonial Punjab government and the colonizers were well aware of the local culture and effectively exploited the Indian's desire for izzat (honor). Though the recruitment in the British Indian Army was being done on the principle of 'martial race', the massive demand for manpower during WWI shifted the traditional Punjabi recruitment patterns. The base of recruitment was expanded. Those castes that were previously excluded from the military services such as Hindus, Sikhs, and the Muslim 'non-martial' castes and tribes were also included in the British Indian Army. (Das,2008) During this whole process, Sir O'Dwyer was endeavoring to call most of the Punjabis for the war efforts.

Leigh greatly praises the role of O'Dwyer and at times it seems to be a bit biased towards O'Dwyer. He used the term "wonderful energy and ability" for O'Dwyer. (Leigh, 1922)

The crux of the content of the formal speeches, appeals, and addresses of O'Dwyer in different areas of Punjab was summarized by M. S. Leigh. He argued that Jhelum, Ludhiana, Rawalpindi, Rohtak are reminded of their valor of their men, and the spirit of their women; they are simply urged to persevere to the end. Gujranwala, Lahore, Karnal and Ferozepore are called upon to recall their historic traditions of bravery and to emulate the finest districts and neighboring states. In some cases, the number of

casualties is emphasized to motivate courageous avengers, while in others, the comparatively small toll relative to deaths from fever and plague is highlighted. Battle honors are offered as an incentive to some, while rewards of pay or land are presented to others. (Leigh, 1922)

M. S. Leigh developed this summary from the full-length speeches which were published by the colonial Government of Punjab in 1918. He delivered around twenty-four speeches in total. Not less than nineteen of the speeches were given at the recruitment durbars from 1917 to 1918. (Government of British India, 1918) In addition to that, O'Dwyer argues that during his rule in Punjab, administration was working for recruitment. (Government of British India, 1918) He explains in the book about the utilization of the concept of izzat (honor). He emphasizes that the most compelling way to motivate Punjabis is by appealing to their izzat (honor) or that of their tribe, caste, or community, and that such appeals are most effective when made publicly through durbars, a traditional practice in local administration. Consequently, from the outset of the war, he reinstated the practice of holding durbars in every district or cluster of districts as a means of war propaganda. Beginning in July 1917, these large assemblies were used to engage prominent local figures, particularly those involved in recruitment, to review enlistment outcomes by tribe, religion, and locality, to alert officials and civilians to the shared threat, and to encourage continued recruitment efforts. (Government of British India, 1918)

O'Dwyer knew very well how to entice and influence the local Punjabi people. His efforts to host and speak at public gatherings were quite successful and effective. He started his recruitment-related tour in 1917. According to O'Dwyer, around 95,000 soldiers were recruited in 1917; whereas around 134,000 soldiers were recruited in 1918 from the Punjab Province only. (Government of British India, 1918) It means roughly 40,000 more Punjabis recruited themselves into the Army in 1918 as compared to 1917. The concept of izzat (honor) is of utmost importance in this regard; izzat (honor) is an Urdu word that means respect, honor, and prestige for an individual, his family, tribe, village, city, or nation. Punjabis are emotionally attached to the sense of honor and prestige of their families and caste which was successfully and effectively exploited

by O'Dwyer. At times, he deliberately compared the role of different areas or cities in his speeches to entice and urge the local community for maximum recruitment in the name of honor and competition with the other castes or villages. For instance, he presented the example of splendid manpower contributions by the North-West Punjab. In his speech, he mentioned that the districts of the Southwest Punjab are running short of time to prove their loyalty. (Government of British India, 1918)

Though the Indians were promised to be given respect, honor, and special status in society, their efforts were hardly recognized and acknowledged by the British. They were even not given a due share in the canon of history as their efforts remained ignored in the available literature of military history. Santau Das truly pointed out that the Indian soldiers who fought for the name of the British Empire "have been doubly marginalized: by Indian nationalist history which has largely focused on the heroes of the Independence movement and by the grand narrative of the war which remains largely Eurocentric." (Das, 2008).

Role of Local Punjabi Leadership in the Recruitment Process

O'Dwyer's strategy to improve recruitment was very significant as he utilised all available means of influence for the achievement of the goal. He deliberately incorporated many notable landed elites in the Punjab Recruiting Board in 1917. He was aware of the local Punjabi culture and the potential of the landed elite to serve the British interests by bringing in the required recruits. In September 1916, there was demand of camel and mule drivers and authorities decided to fulfil this demand from Punjab but it was reported that the limits in their respective districts had already been reached. O'Dwyer decided that the most effective way was to give the task to four prominent men from the province, In less than a month, these notables provided camel and mule drivers which was more than double the original demand. (Yong, 2005) In the western districts of Punjab, several religious leaders also helped the British in the recruitment process. Several pirs were even awarded gifts and encouragements in the form of land canal colonies by the British in acknowledgment of their social status and political influence in their localities. (Talbot, 1988) Many of these Pirs instructed their murids to enlist in the British Indian Army for the cause of

WWI. The British also developed good relations with several notable families of the Sikhs, including those who also had a spiritual influence in the Sikh community such as Bhai Arjan Singh Bagarian of Ludhiana and Bhai Khem Singh Bedi of Rawalpindi. Such figures also influenced the Sikhs to enlist in the British Indian Army. (Leigh, 1922) Several zamindars of the dominant Jats played a considerable role in the recruitment process in the southern Punjab. In short, without the active support of the landed elites, tribal chiefs, and religious figures, such a massive recruitment was not possible in Punjab.

Coercive Measures by the Punjab Administration for Recruitment

Despite all the efforts by the civil-military administration and local leadership, a limitless supply of manpower from Punjab was not ensured, especially in the last year of the war. Indubitably, by 1918, the Punjab had been badly exhausted by the war. The negative impacts of the war, heavy rainfall of 1917, and subsequent epidemics of malaria and plague played havoc with the populace, including the youth – men of military age. (Leigh, 1922) Despite all possible efforts by the authorities, more recruitment of manpower from Punjab was not ensured. Even the commissioner of Rawalpindi reported that the signs of tension and strain had begun to appear in many areas of his division. It is important to point out that Rawalpindi was the division with the highest number of recruitments in the country. However, owing to the demands of more men, the British started taking draconian steps. For example, Leigh recorded that recruits were traded (bought and sold) for huge sums of money in southwest Punjab. (Leigh, 1922) Similarly, in Multan, villages were asked to provide funds to purchase recruits from other villages if the people of that village were not willing to be enlisted. In another case reported by Tan Tai Yong, a villager from Shahpur district complained that he and other men from Nowshehra were forcibly recruited into the army by using legal provisions. Owing to such harsh steps by the British, violence erupted in many areas of Multan, Muzaffargarh, Shahpur, and Jhelum on the issue of recruitment. However, the situation was controlled by suspending the recruitment process.

Conclusion

This study reflects the statistical figures of military recruitment from the Punjab region of the subcontinent during World War I. Colonial Punjab became the hub for the British Indian Army's recruitment. Punjabi soldiers served the interests of the Empire in Europe, the Middle East, and many parts of Africa. By the end of the war, one out of every twenty-six males in the province was mobilized compared to a ratio of one to one hundred and fifty in other parts of India. Although the recruitment process was generally straightforward and peaceful, a few isolated cases of violent resistance were noted. However, owing to the effective role of the administration of colonial Punjab and the facilitating role of local leadership, Punjab not only provided around sixty percent of the total soldiers for the British Indian Army but also remained stable, emerging as a leading province in the aftermath of the war. The British policymakers recognized the flaws in the policy of recruitment based on martial race theory and replaced it with a more inclusive approach. Moreover, the integration of civil and military administration provided the required impetus to ensure a maximum number of recruits. The landed elite and religious figures played the role of intermediaries, helping the British enlist local people into the military and mitigating resistance. The practice of civil-military cooperation in Punjab during the war era resulted in a permanent alliance between the military and bureaucracy. This cooperation laid the foundation for a lasting alliance between the military and the bureaucracy in Punjab, which had far-reaching implications. It reinforced the region's strategic importance to the British colonial administration. The alliance between the military and bureaucracy, established during World War I, influenced Punjab’s future trajectory. It solidified the region’s strategic importance in British colonial policy and later in Indian and Pakistani politics. The legacy of this collaboration deeply shaped the socio-political dynamics of Punjab, affecting governance structures and the military’s role in society throughout the 20th century. This enduring partnership left a lasting imprint on the region's future development.

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